



Andover, Hebron, Marlborough Youth and Family Services, Inc.
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February 21, 2017

To: Elementary and Secondary Sub-Committee Chairs: Chairwoman Gayle Slossberg, Chairman Chris Rosario
Appropriations Committee: Chairs Sen. Cathy Osten, Sen. Paul Formica, Rep. Toni Walker, and Ranking Member Melissa Ziobron

I am writing to provide testimony in support of local Youth Service Bureaus. My organization, AHM Youth and Family Services, is a regional non-profit agency that has unique SDE funded program departments; a Youth Service Bureau and a Family Resource Center. AHM serves the towns of Andover, Columbia, Hebron and Marlborough. Annually, AHM reaches over 6,000 residents annually.

As a community based human services provider, AHM focuses on the coordination and delivery of intervention, prevention, juvenile justice, youth and family development programs. Like our peer youth service bureaus across the state, AHM leverages state, local and private contributory dollars to maximize funding we have available to deliver services.

Please be reminded that YSB's and FRC's were among the first to respond to the State Legislature's move towards RBA – Results Based Accountability processes. Youth Service Bureaus were among the first to respond to the Connecticut Juvenile Justice systems call for reform to divert young people from the juvenile justice system, which we have done for years through Juvenile Review Boards. Youth Service Bureaus have succeeded in reaching and serving hundreds of thousands of children and youth dating back to the 1970's providing intervention, juvenile justice, prevention, youth and family development services. And family resource centers have done ground breaking work helping to prepare future generations of children for educational and vocational success.

Youth service bureaus grant should remain separate and not be included with the SBDI line item. We understand that everyone will have to sacrifice but YSB's have already lost \$500,000 in the last three years. This may not be a lot to some but it is a lot spread out among the 102 YSB's and for many YSB's that work on shoestring budgets, it means a lot.

Organizations like AHM Youth and Family Services provide a wealth of opportunities that other agencies can't provide. We are unique in that we build stronger children and families and take care of the whole child. With the increased juvenile justice being placed on communities because of the "raise the age" legislation being discussed and the proposed closing of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and the elimination of the Family with Service Needs referrals for truancy and defiance of school rules to juvenile court, YSB's will continue to play a key role in expanding and providing diversion programs to meet the needs of our most at risk youth. Additional support will be needed at the local level to accomplish the good work that YSB's are responsible for. I implore the appropriations committee to keep our funding intact.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Hamilton
Executive Director